

Vernacular Chinese in Tokugawa Japan The Inquiries of Ogyū Sorai

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Little interest was taken in colloquial Chinese at the beginning of the Tokugawa period. Although classical Chinese was painstakingly learned by hundreds of Confucian scholars throughout Japan, colloquial Chinese was mastered by only a handful of interpreters 唐通事 (*tōtsūji*), most of whom lived and worked in Nagasaki. They were consequently connected with the Chinese trade, which was concentrated in Nagasaki and Hirado in 1613, and in 1635 in Nagasaki only. Never numerous, interpreting was a family profession, which was inherited from generation to generation.

In the wake of Chinese trade three Chinese Buddhist temples, the Kōfukuji 興福寺, Fukuzaiji 福濟寺, and Shūfukuji 崇福寺, were built in Nagasaki in the first half of the seventeenth century. Consecutive generations of native Chinese abbots and priests resided in Nagasaki, and it may be assumed that it was there that Chinese sailors and merchants went after arrival. Among these Buddhists were a number of individuals who belonged to a recent Chinese Zen sect, the Ōbaku 黄檗. From its source at the port of Nagasaki this sect spread to many places of Japan. Especially after the collapse of the Ming dynasty in 1644, numerous Ōbaku Zen monks moved to Japan. By the time of the Genroku period there were Ōbaku temples in Edo, and in the temples abbots and monks of Chinese origin. Chinese clerics in Nagasaki made quick visits to Edo, often at the invitation of nobles.

Even though Buddhist priests seem to have been most numerous among refugees after the Ming dynasty collapse, there were also others. The best known among them was Shu Shunsui 朱舜水 (1600–82), a Confucian scholar, who came to Nagasaki in 1659. He was employed by the Mito clan in 1665, in which service he remained until his death in 1682.

These priests and other Chinese represented a revival of Chinese studies in Japan. As hinted above, they were in demand by Confucian scholars, and this slowly led to modern Chinese language studies. The most important catalyst

in this development was Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu 柳澤吉保 (1658–1714), the adviser and preferé of the fifth Tokugawa shogun, Tsunayoshi. Yanagisawa was a devoted Zen believer. He had gone through a long training in this kind of Buddhism, and was constantly in contact with Zen monks. In 1692 he met the first Ōbaku Zen monk, Kōsen 高泉 (1630–1692), who had come from China in 1661. Two years later he invited another Ōbaku monk, Hōun 法雲, to preach on the Buddhist law. Next there was Senbō 千呆, whom he met for the first time in 1696 and with whom he conversed in writing. That Yanagisawa regarded these meetings highly is borne out by the fact that he collected the poetry and written conversations of these meetings in a work entitled *Chokujo gohō jōō roku* 勅書護法常應錄 (*Record of Eternal Answers in Protection of the Law with the Emperor's Preface*). Ogyū Sorai was probably in charge of the work in connection with the compilation. Later in life, Yanagisawa was in contact with two other Chinese Ōbaku monks: Essan 悦山 (1629–1709) and Eppō 悦峯 (1655–1734). Essan arrived in Japan in 1657. He came to Edo in 1705, and was invited to Yanagisawa's mansion. In 1706 he was also invited by Shogun Tsunayoshi. Eppō arrived in Nagasaki in 1686. We have no date of his arrival in Edo and when he first met Yanagisawa, but we know that Tsunayoshi invited him to lecture in his presence after he had met with Yanagisawa in 1708. Part of the written conversation between Yanagisawa and Eppō was recorded by Tanaka Seigo (Shōgo) 田中省吾 (1668–1742), who at the time was a house Confucian in Yanagisawa's mansion.

These visits of clerics to Edo would not have been of much importance, if they would have only been connected with religious activities. Yanagisawa and Shogun Tsunayoshi were, however, not only religiously oriented, but also had a burning thirst for knowledge. Religion and knowledge went hand in hand in their lives. As mentioned, Yanagisawa assembled numerous scholars in his house, trained in the Confucian classics. We know that he studied Japanese poetry (*waka*) with Kitamura Kigin 北村季吟 (1624–1705), and had various teachers in Chinese poetry and essay writing. Probably through the influence of these visiting Chinese scholars, he must have also begun to study vernacular Chinese. Perhaps he found it too tedious to converse in writing, or perhaps he found it an intellectual challenge to discourse in modern Chinese. And, as the master started, the house intellectuals followed. We have found that the Yanagisawa household became the fountain-head of a new interest in spoken Chinese. In the early visits of Kōsen, Essan, and Senbō conversation in writing seems to have been routine; later, however, records indicate that the lectures were given orally in vernacular Chinese. The turning-point might have been in the early 1700s, when attempts were made at lecturing in Chinese

by 1708. We read in the *Jōken'in dono gojikki* 常憲院殿御實紀, on the 13th day of the second month 1703:

On the 13th day [the shogun] proceeded to the place of Matsudaira, lord of Mino, Yoshiyasu. [...] The house scholars lectured on the *Shih Ching* 詩經. Some of them lectured on *Ta Hsieh* 大學 in colloquial Chinese 唐音 (*tōin*), and some of them had a question-and-answer session in colloquial Chinese. All of them were presented with seasonal garments 時服 (*jifuku*).¹

Since the conversation recorded by Tanaka Seigo illustrates both Yanagisawa's religiousness and the tone of the time, it is given here in translation:

Yanagisawa:

After you, Great Reverend, came down east [Edo], my happiness could not restrain itself; after you, holy carrier of the Law, graced me by coming to my country villa, my happiness was more than doubly increased. How could this be so? I think that an ancient Buddha has manifested himself to give me direction.

Eppō:

Each time I intrude on your lordship's vast virtue, I feel that there is no way for me to repay you. Now again I stay in your honourable mansion. It is like ascending to a fairyland. My gratitude cannot be expressed. Further, I who wears coarse [i.e. Buddhist] clothes am deeply ashamed of my stupidity and shallowness and cannot be called a vessel of the Way. Like an ancient Buddha he has manifested himself to give me direction. How do I deserve that?

Yanagisawa:

You must right here and now consider my residence the sleeping quarters of the Ōbaku sect 槃山 (Bakusan).

Eppō:

I liken this to taking phoenix wood and giving it as a roost to cranes. Also outside pines, bamboo and the wisteria in the end accomplish happiness. By daily cultivation and repentance I respond to your special favours. However, I have yet to thank you. Today again I have given your lordship the trouble to come down to meet with me, and my heart is not at ease. What gives me joy is that the excellence of the long-robed lords [the Confucian scholars of the Yanagi-

1 KEIZAI ZASSHI SHA 経済雑誌社 (ed.): *Kokushi taikēi (zoku)* 国史大系 続 (Compendium of Japanese History, continued), Keizai Zasshi Sha, vol. 12, 徳川実紀 第4編 明治36 *Tokugawa jikki, dai 4 hen* (The True Tokugawa Records), Meiji 36 (1903), 756–66.

sawa house] is not overpraised. How could Chang Wu-chin have anything to add?

Yanagisawa:

My house scholars always serve me diligently. Always into the night they are not lazy. Today they rejoice greatly over the fact that I asked you, Great Reverend, [to come to my place]. Further, they hope that there will be nothing to disturb your way and thought.

Eppō:

You have made [your various personnel] scholars work especially hard for me. The close servants are very sincere. They serve me morning and evening. Everything they do is to my satisfaction. Their accompanying me and their taking me to see landscapes makes me very pleased. It has created a feeling of great gratitude in me.

Yanagisawa:

Today I again intended to have a conversation with you, but when I came over, the lords had not yet eaten. I am about to go to the Rikugikan 六義館 (Hall of the Six Righteousnesses), and my wife [Tsujiibo 次子母: the mother of my second child] will watch the spring in the Ginkatei 吟華亭 (Chanting Flower Pavilion). Since we therefore will not go together, you, Great Reverend, can come with me. My wife will come and see you frequently. Another day, I will fulfil the wish of my house officials to meet you.

Eppō:

Today your lordship picked the right day for loosening your belt and putting on light clothes, and for retiring from official life and enjoying yourself. Since you are to go and enjoy the spring, your officials and I dare not keep you company. Later I shall come and see you in your residence and thank you for your vast favours. At that time it will not be too late for us to have our meeting.

Yanagisawa:

Until you return I say goodbye to you. Further, there is a shogunal order that from now on all the head priests 住持 (*jūji*) of the Ōbaku sect shall be Chinese priests. They must not come from among the Japanese priests. Today I personally transmit these words to you.

This was said by the lord of Kai on the first day of the third month of the year of the Rat [1708] who had invited the Great Reverend, Old Eppō, of the Ōbaku sect to his country villa. [...]

The conversation was made by means of brush. And I ordered the house scholar Tanaka Seigo to write it down.²

As can be seen, much reverence and politeness are expressed throughout the conversation. There is no denying the fact that Yanagisawa was a seriously religious person, which is clearly attested to in this dialogue. On this occasion they never came to the point of discussing minute points in Zen thought, but it is still of much interest, not least because it was in written form 筆談 (*hitsudan*).

One may wonder how many in the Yanagisawa household were accomplished enough to hold a conversation in Chinese or understand a Chinese lecture by 1703. According to Ishizaki Matazō, it was Kuraoka Sozan 鞍岡蘇山 (1679–1750) who gave the lecture. He came to Edo in 1698 and through Sorai's good offices became attached to the Yanagisawa house. He was of a family that specialized in Chinese interpretation, and therefore one can expect that he could give the lecture. More surprising is by Ishizaki's statement that Sorai acted as the interpreter. As will be seen later, Sorai was not that far advanced in modern Chinese by 1703. And, further, who could respond in Chinese if Kuraoka asked in Chinese? We meet with a similar event in 1705. When the shogun visited the Yanagisawa house, the concept "mean" in Chinese philosophy was discussed in Chinese. It is said in the *Tokugawa jikki* that the thirteen house philosophers, among them Sorai and Shimura Sanzaemon 志村三左衛門, participated in the discussion. One is perhaps not wrong in conjecturing that it was in quite hesitant Chinese that they talked. We hear about a third such event in 1708. The Zen Priest Eppō visited the shogunal castle and gave a question-and-answer session, while a "Japanese priest" 日本僧 (Nihonsō) interpreted. It is said that Yanagisawa was the only person who understood the questions and answered without having to wait for the interpreter. The latter statement could be true. Yanagisawa had by this time been in more or less constant contact with Chinese priests for sixteen years, and, being a scholar, he must have learned some modern Chinese. However, it could also be mere eulogy. It was mentioned above that he had used his brush when he conversed with Eppō when the latter, in the same year visited his house.

It is conceivable that under such circumstances the Yanagisawa household became a hot-house for continued Chinese studies. The Chinese priests were not the only visitors. It seems that anyone with a semblance of Chinese knowl-

2 TSUJI Zennosuke 辻善之助: *Jinbutsu ronsō* 人物論叢 (Collection of Essays on Noted Personalities), Yūzankaku 雄山閣 1925: 364–65.

edge was welcome. Among them there were Nagasaki scholars and interpreters, also Japanese Buddhist priests who had in one way or another acquired some knowledge of modern Chinese. Let us discuss those who are mentioned in the literature.

Ishiwara Teian 石原鼎菴 (1658–1698) was a Nagasaki scholar who, while a physician by profession, pursued modern Chinese studies under Kasō Teiichi 華僧淳一. Perhaps at the beginning of the Genroku era he arrived in Edo. He did not become attached to the Yanagisawa house, but through becoming the teacher of modern Chinese to Andō Tōya 安藤東野 (?1682–1718), one of the scholars of the Yanagisawa house and one of the first students who turned to Sorai for guidance, he was perhaps the first scholar to introduce modern Chinese studies to Sorai and his circle. Sorai later mentioned him first among those whom he had known in modern Chinese studies, and Dazai Shundai 春臺太宰 (1680–1747) spoke appreciatory about him in his work, the *Shishien manpitsu* 紫芝園漫筆. Dazai said:

Among those in this age in the East who could well read Chinese books, there was no one like Ishi[wara] Teian. Teian was from Nagasaki. [...] In the era of Genroku he came to the eastern capital [Edo]. He was advanced in medicine, and he knew modern Chinese well. [...] He died at about forty. [...] My friend Andō Heki 安藤壁 [Tōya] sat before Teian from his early years and received his teaching.³

Kuraoka Sozan was the son of a Chinese interpreter in Nagasaki and thus he received good schooling in spoken Chinese. He came to Edo in 1698 at nineteen years of age. He seems to have come in touch with Sorai's group of students soon after his arrival, and through Sorai's good offices he came into the service of the Yanagisawa house. Thus he became both Sorai's friend and teacher, and it may be assumed that it was in his company that Sorai at one time or another began to read and speak colloquial Chinese. It was this Kuraoka Sozan who, as was mentioned above, gave a lecture in Chinese in the shogun's presence, using his friend Sorai as the interpreter. It is possible that Sorai's studies of modern Chinese began with his association with Kuraoka Sozan. It is testimony to their friendship that Kuraoka is supposed to have written the inscription on Sorai's tombstone.

3 Ref. ISHIZAKI Matazō 石崎又造: *Kinsei Nihon ni okeru Shina zokugo bungaku shi* 近世日本に於ける支那俗語文學史 (A History of Literature in Vernacular Chinese in Early Modern Japan), 弘文堂書房 Kōbundō Shobō 1940: 55.

Fukami Gendai 深見玄岱 (1642–1722) was a Nagasaki man of Chinese descent. His father was a “great interpreter” and he saw to it that his son received a thorough education in medicine, the Chinese language and Confucian philosophy. He was later called on by the bakufu to come to Edo and become a shogunal Confucian official 儒官 (*jukan*). As such he served with Muro Kyūsō, Miyake Kanran and others. This was in 1710. Sorai sought his acquaintance, but apparently met with little success. It must be remembered that in 1710 Sorai had left the Yanagisawa house and was removed from official life. If Fukami Gendai had arrived a couple of years earlier, they might have met in the philosophical meetings that Yanagisawa and Shogun Tsunayoshi arranged.

Nakano Giken 中野偽謙 (1666–1720) was also from Nagasaki and from a house that specialized in modern Chinese interpretation. He arrived in Edo in 1705 at eighteen years of age and came into the service of the Makino house. Lord Makino and lord Yanagisawa served together at the shogunal court and were also otherwise in close contact: they were both philosophically inclined, and Shogun Tsunayoshi visited the Makino house for philosophical expositions in the way he visited the Yanagisawa house. It is known that Giken lectured on such visits. It is thus only natural that Giken would be in contact with the Yanagisawa house scholars, and even become the teacher of some of them. We know that Shundai studied with him and became his friend. Dazai Shundai wrote the epitaph for Giken when he died in 1720. Also Andō Tōya studied with him. The question is whether he was also Sorai’s teacher. As will be seen below, Sorai once stated that he had begun to speak Chinese in 1705, which could easily mean that Giken was the teacher. Imanaka Kanshi 今中寛司 states flatly that Sorai made him his teacher in modern Chinese, and Iwazaki is equally firm in stating that Giken became the instructor of Sorai’s modern Chinese study group. If this is so, the arrival of Giken meant much for the development of modern Chinese studies within Sorai’s school and perhaps even marks the beginning of these studies.

Okajima Kanzan 岡嶋冠山 (1675–1728) was also a Nagasaki scholar. Not even twenty years old, he was employed by the Mori family as an interpreter (1694); however, dissatisfied with this “base occupation” he turned to studies of Neo-Confucian philosophy. In 1706 or 1707 he arrived in Edo to serve the Toda family. In 1708 he met Sorai in the Tōkaiji Temple 東海寺 in Shinagawa, and this meeting marked the beginning of a long association. In the fall of 1708 he left the service in the Toda house, and lectured for a while in Ōsaka. In 1710 he was again in Edo where he enrolled in the Hayashi school and served as a Confucian scholar at the shogunal court. In this capacity he was among those who met with the Korean embassy when they arrived in the 10th month

of 1710. At the same time, Kanzan was in touch with Sorai's Ken'en school, and in 1711 was invited to become the instructor of Sorai's interpretation society 譯者 (*yakusha*). Although he seems to have caused Sorai and others much trouble through his erratic behaviour, Kanzan's career and impact on Japanese intellectual life deserves its own study. As far as it concerns Sorai's Ken'en school, it will be treated more in depth below.

We should also list Priest Taichō 大潮 (1676–1768). He differs from those previously mentioned in that he became a full member of Sorai's school. He was born in the Nagasaki area (Matsuura 松浦), and at fifteen years of age became attached to an Ōbaku Zen temple in Bizen. Later, he also studied modern Chinese in Nagasaki. From 1710 to 1717 he stayed in Edo, and was in such close association with Sorai and his school that he is considered one of Sorai's first students.

Ueno Gentei 上野玄貞 (1661–1713) should perhaps also be mentioned despite the fact that he never came to Edo and never was in touch with the Sorai clique. Nevertheless, he was indirectly of much importance for this group, and is often mentioned by Sorai and others, and should therefore not be forgotten. He is mostly known by the name Koku Shisei 國思靖. He lived in Nagasaki, studied Confucianism with a Ming scholar, learned medicine at the Kōfukuji Temple together with Ishiwara Teian (see above), and became versed in several Chinese dialects. The interpreters in Nagasaki made him their teacher, and he is said to have had 700 students. His reputation spread with his students, among whom we find the above-mentioned Okajima Kanzan and Priest Taichō. Four others among his students who achieved fame in their Chinese studies were Ro Sōsetsu 盧艸拙, Tensan Shōnin 天産聖人, Etsū Shōnin 恵通聖人, and Amenomori Hōshū 雨森報酬 (1668–1755). Both Tensan Shōnin and Etsū Shōnin are listed among the participants in Sorai's translation society, and hence it is probable that they had arrived in Edo by 1711. There are no dates available for Tensan Shōnin; Etsū Shōnin died in 1746. Amenomori Hōshū was a great scholar in his own right, worth a treatise of his own. When he was sixteen or seventeen he became Kinoshita Jun'an's disciple, and later entered the service of the Tsushima clan. His language studies included both modern Chinese and Korean. As far as we know, he himself was never in touch with Sorai, but he sent his son to study in Sorai's school. This was his oldest son Kennosuke 兼之助, and it was in 1711. However, the father disapproved of Sorai's *kobunji* 古文辭 teaching and seems to have soon taken his son out of the school.

There were also others who were mentioned in Sorai's writing. Nanbu Nanzan 南部南山 (d. 1713) was another Nagasaki scholar who came to Edo during

the Genroku era and enrolled in Kinoshita Jun'an's school. Sorai wrote about him and Fukami Gendai in the following manner:

The two gentlemen, Nanbu Nanzan and Kō 高 [Fukami Gendai] are [or were] proficient in colloquial Chinese 華音 (*kaon*), and thereby made themselves heard in the world.⁴

Priest Kōshū 香洲 was one of Sorai's disciples; he seems to have had a good knowledge of Chinese, ancient and modern. He was present at the meeting Sorai had with Abbot Eppō in 1709 (see below). Priest Kōkoku 香國 was, if not a disciple, a close friend of Sorai. We know that they met in the Tōkaiji Temple in Shinagawa in 1708, when Okajima Kanzan was also present. He was Priest Taichō's father-in-law.

A few facts stand out clearly in listing these Genroku scholars. All had received their training in modern Chinese in Nagasaki or through Nagasaki scholars. Almost all of them were of Kyūshū origin. At one time or another all of them gravitated in the direction of Edo. In most cases they probably set out to seek service and stipend at the place where lords, power and opportunities were concentrated. One or two among them seem to have been invited, service and stipend being offered in advance. Although some of them were employed by the shogunate and other lords, most of them became members of the Yanagisawa household and of the Ogyū Sorai group of scholars within this household. When Sorai left the Yanagisawa service in 1709 and set up his school in the city, most of them turned to this school as students or friends. Therefore, although we can surmise that there were modern Chinese studies in other places – among the shogunal scholars, in Kinoshita Jun'an's school, in the mansions of some lords –, the heavy concentration of these studies was located in the Yanagisawa house and in the circle around Sorai. It appears that early on Sorai became a centre of interest in the study of modern Chinese. When he left the Yanagisawa house, this centre was naturally removed to his new location in the city. The study of modern Chinese became an integral part of the curriculum of the Ken'en school, which will be described below. However, it must be remembered that modern Chinese studies were never an end in themselves in the Ken'en School.

4 Ref. HIRAISHI Naoaki 平石直昭 (ed.): *Sorai shū Sorai shū shūi* 徂徠集 徂徠集拾遺 (Collection of Sorai's [Writings]; Supplement to the Collection of Sorai's [Writings]), Perikan Sha ぺりかん社 1985 (Kinsei juka bunshū shūsei, dai 3 kan 近世儒家文集集成 第3巻): 89.

For Sorai modern Chinese was a tool that was needed in historical research, a means to understanding history. His goal was certainly to restore the ancient Confucian vision to history and government as far as possible, but it was also part of his thinking that one must attempt to understand each Chinese age in which this vision had been lost. This could only be done through learning the language of each age in question; to understand the Chinese age they lived in, scholars had to master the Chinese of the Ch'ing era. This gave philosophical impetus to these studies, and it can perhaps be said that this new view on, and interest in, Chinese history paved the way for modern Chinese studies in the later half of the Tokugawa period.

It is an often forgotten fact that Sorai devoted much time to his acquaintances in the modern Chinese field, whether they were Zen priests or Nagasaki scholars, and that he wrote to them and about them. They apparently formed an important part of his social world besides Confucian scholars and students. Here is a sample of what he wrote to and about them: In a letter to the Zen Priest Kōkoku, who was himself accomplished in modern Chinese, Sorai wrote some time after 1710:

I have known the various people who were proficient in colloquial Chinese 華語 (*kago*): Seki [Ishiwara] Teian 鼎菴, An [Kuraoka] Sozan, and [lord] Oka[jima Kanzan] who served together with me. They were so exceptional and rare that one applauded and beat the table each time [one listened to them]. [...] Further, when sometime ago I sat in a gathering and saw the handwriting of a Nagasaki person Kō Gendai [Fukami Gendai], in my thoughts I wished to obtain one or two widths. And at one time when I listened enthusiastically to the hum of [the old reverend's] voice, I was so absorbed by the beautiful metallic tone that I ended forgetting to tell him about it. I am not clear as to whether he has returned or not. If he has not returned yet, I beg for one chance [to see him]. I wish you could bring my wretched name to him, for which my thanks would be expressed at a later date. Then I will add in this world one acquaintance who will infinitely broaden my view of the Way. It all depends on your help.⁵

This attests to the fact that Sorai had been in personal contact with Ishiwara Teian, Kuraoka Sozan, and Kanzan, and it can be assumed that he was still in touch with Kanzan at the time that he wrote the letter. Fukami Gendai represented the problem. Sorai probably felt that his collection was not complete as long as this eminent Nagasaki scholar was not added to his group of Confucian

5 Ibid.: 320–21.

acquaintances. Unfortunately we do not know how Priest Kōkoku responded to his request and whether he got the coveted chance to meet Fukami Gendai.

In another undated communication Sorai wrote:

Ah, it is truly a long time that I have associated with Nagasaki people. As Kuan Tzu 管子 says, “If one only thinks without stopping, the gods will come and help.” I first got [in touch with] [lord] Kura[oka] Sozan, a man from Nagasaki. Thereupon, I got [in touch with] [lord] [An]dō Tōya. Andō Tōya studied [Chinese] with Ishi[wara] Gohō [Teian], a man from Nagasaki. Further, I got [in touch with] [master] [Naka]no Giken, with whom I struck up a friendship. And he is the nephew of Hayashi Razan in Nagasaki. All theses people visited my house. I observed them. Their clothes and caps were Japanese, but their words and smiles were Chinese. There was nothing about them that was not amazing. In our land of sixty-six provinces, by means of what conglomeration of *ki* 氣 were people like them created? Their teaching was generally only based on the *Shui hu* 水滸, the *Hsi yu* 西游, the *Hsi hsiang* 西廂, the *Ming yüeh* 明月, and similar works. When it comes to what is vulgar and lascivious, diabolical and demonic, our mouths do not choose such words. It is just in Chinese [studies] that these [words] are essential. When we investigate them thoroughly, we necessarily make old and modern times come clear. [These words] end up being at one with what is elegant. This can only be done by means of the way of making the sounds [and pronunciation] of the words come clear.⁶

The message is revealing. Sozan was a Nagasaki scholar whom Sorai had met. Since he did not arrive in Edo until 1698, this encounter could not have taken place until that year. If it is right, Sorai did not meet Tōya until after he had met Sozan.

The letter presents a problem, because other sources have it that Tōya had already become Sorai’s friend and disciple in 1696. But if this letter is correct, it would mean that Sorai did not meet Tōya until 1698 or later, and further that he never met Ishiwara Teian, who died in 1698. If Sorai therefore knew Ishiwara Teian, as he says in the above letter, it was only through Tōya. It could also be possible that Sorai, in the heat of his writing, made some mistake. When he speaks of Nakano Giken being the nephew of Hayashi Razan, he means Hayashi Dōei 林道榮 who was also a scholar in modern Chinese in Nagasaki in this era, and who was probably not related to the illustrious Hayashi family in Edo. It is apparent that Sorai was much impressed by Giken and

6 Ibid.: 101.

perhaps other Nagasaki scholars. In this translation they are referred to in the plural. To Imanaka the text seems to refer only to Giken. Perhaps Imanaka's interpretation is the correct one; if so, then it is only Giken whom Sorai praises in the second half of the text. Finally, the letter is also revealing in terms of how Sorai describes the importance of learning of modern Chinese. Modern vernacular is based on and developed from old elegant Chinese, and just as one has to learn the old Chinese to understand earlier times, so one has to learn modern Chinese to understand modern times. It seems to be Sorai's view that the elegant Chinese of ancient times was nothing but the vulgar, vernacular Chinese of those times. Therefore it is also important to read modern Ming novels, such as the *Shui hu*, the *Hsi yu*, and the *Hsi hsiang*. There is only one way to achieve clarity on this point: the long and arduous path of learning both ancient and modern Chinese, and not in the old Japanese fashion of learning Chinese, but read and pronounced in Chinese throughout.

In a letter to Priest Kōkoku, Sorai wrote about their relationship:

As for [me Shigenori] my relationship with [you], Kōkoku, the Zen Master (Zenshi) [it began] some time ago when at the place of my friend Ta[naka] Seigo I could gradually [see] read [your] *Joki* (Records), *Geju* (Poems), and various other works. Already then my heart was captivated. Consequently, in company with a man from Nagasaki, Oka[jima] Gyokusei [Kanzan], I once proceeded to a Buddhist temple 精舎 (*shōja*) in Shinagawa, and there for the first time I came in close contact with your wonderful person. I listened to your expostulation, and together we discussed and went over the upper and lower one thousand years [perhaps: early and late history]. We did it in an atmosphere of spiritual warmth and understanding. The language 文章 (*bunshō*: literature), therefore, is plain and simple.

The age, carrying the language with it, changes; the sounds, depending on the soil, have their limits. Ancient and modern times do not reach each other. The Japanese are not like the Chinese in this respect. This he said emphatically. In pure delight we considered things together, and in our breasts we were of one spirit that knew of no opposition. [...]

Moreover, due to this, the reputation of you Zen Master spread widely in the Eastern capital [Edo]. [...]

Now, [you] Zen Master are a teacher of Zen. Zen is something I do not understand. I only know your literature, Zen Master.⁷

7 Ibid.: 89.

It may be that this Zen priest, Kōkoku, exerted much influence on Sorai's philosophical thinking in general. Sorai apparently had read his writings by the time they met for the first time. This meeting took place in a Buddhist temple in Shinagawa in the company of Kanzan. We know that Sorai met him in the Tōkaiji Temple for the first time in 1708, and we can assume that he also met Kōkoku for the first time, at the same time. If Sorai had formulated his views on history and philosophy by 1708, then he had met here a man of like views. But it can just as well be that Sorai, by this year, had not yet formulated any complete philosophy in either respect – the letter hints in that direction – and, therefore, that Kōkoku was one of the few persons who moulded Sorai's thinking. Kōkoku was perhaps one of the many Zen monks in Japanese history who were more erudite than Buddhist, and who through vast erudition had acquired personal views and philosophies. He perhaps saw Chinese history as an “upper” and a “lower” period of one thousand years each; during the first, everything had been perfect (the three early dynasties), but during the second, things had been far from perfect. This was approximately the way Sorai saw (Chinese) history in his later works. Further, he realized that the language changes when the historical picture changes, and that China therefore had had (at least) two sets of language since it had had two one-thousand-year eras. Such change had not occurred throughout Japanese history, and therefore there had not been much linguistic change either. Here we find that Sorai has Priest Kōkoku utter the most important premises upon which his later *kobunji* thinking was based. Is it too much to say that it was Kōkoku who helped guide Sorai to the insights which would help him lay the cornerstones of his entire school of thought? Well, he says so himself in this letter. Further, we know of no one else who saw things in the manner that Kōkoku first, and then Sorai later, saw them. If so, the year 1708 and the meeting in the Tōkaiji Temple were important milestones in the development of Sorai's thinking. The letter shows, finally, that although Sorai took an intense interest in the erudition of Zen monks, that is, in their Chinese schooling and Confucian ideas, he took little interest in their Zen mysticism.

Another Buddhist whom Sorai mentions with appreciation was Priest Taichō. To him (and about him) Sorai wrote in the following manner:

Alone Roshi 魯子 [Priest Taichō] of the West said with much emotion: “Even though Buddhism, after it appeared in the world, came East crossing the Sōrei Mountains, the Sūdra which are transmitted in the world are totally within [the categories of] the Songs and History. Now, the fact is that China's language degenerated, and the translator commits mistakes if he compares ancient Chi-

nese with the Chinese of Sung.” Roshi truly knows the words. It is not long since Roshi was here, but his writing has spread more and more. [...] Roshi has further had his Buddhist training. Although Roshi, in what he cultivates, is intimately attached to Buddhism, he can handle Chinese classics in his writing. Therefore, since the time that Buddhism arose, there has not yet been anyone like Roshi. As Buddha said: “In eastern Han there were truly Buddhist Confucianists!” Now, at a time that Confucianism is on the decline, I unfortunately became a Confucianist. What is more, how many are there in our land whose achievements lay wasted! Roshi is truly a person who can be called a Confucian! Moreover, I study colloquial Chinese with Roshi. This is the reason why Roshi is a member of our party (*waga tō*). [...] ⁸

Taichō was apparently another Buddhist who successfully combined Buddhist devotion with Confucian erudition and Chinese learning. And as Sorai says in this communication, it was Taichō’s erudition and learning in Chinese culture that made him a valued visitor to, and member of, the Ken’en School. One gains the impression that he was a prolific writer. He must have come in touch with Sorai and his circle soon after his arrival in Edo in 1710, and for the eight following years he was probably Sorai’s teacher in modern Chinese. He is thus listed as one of the members of Sorai’s Chinese Translation Society. Sorai appreciated Priest Taichō for the fact that he differentiated between ancient and modern Chinese. He was thus in tune with Sorai’s basic thinking, and must have been more than welcome in the club.

Sorai further wrote this illuminating preface to the bequeathed writings of Ueno Gentei:

Now, after I began to study colloquial Chinese, I gradually became aware of the existence of a person by the name of Koku Shisei [Ueno Gentei] in Nagasaki. His reputation was great. Thus I thought that here was really the master among teachers of translation 譯士 (*yakushi*). Now, Nagasaki is the place where ocean-sailing ships come to port; it is the port of myriad goods and strange objects; where people from all [the five] directions gather, abandoning their homes and coveting profit; it is the first destination of our land. However the products differ as to their origin and the languages differ as to their quality. Further, the teachers of translation are at their wealthiest in Nagasaki. Now, it is there that people aim for profit, their reputation accompanies [the profit]. Japanese learn to flip their tongues and to loosen their lips. How can this be called the Way and Art 道藝 (*dōgei*)? To cough in a clear and detailed fashion like

8 Ibid.: 105–106.

the Chinese, and, moreover, to chirp and to grit one's teeth like the Chinese, how can that be called the Way and Art? Just because they reside at the place of trade and master foreign commercial prattle, they say that this is it and consider it attainment of the Way. A teacher is a teacher because of this. Students are students because of this. Also a person like Koku Shisei was celebrated and became famous in his home place because of this. How can this be enough for admiration? [However,] through my association with his disciple Oka[jima] Gyokusei [Kanzan] I have also gradually come to hear about the abbot's personality. He was towering and overwhelming like craggy and steep cliffs 欽崎岑衿 (*kinki shinkin*); he had a great heart and deep feelings 落落穆穆 (*rakuraku bokuboku*). He considered profit to be dirt. He was surprised at hearing his name. From childhood until fifty years of age his feet did not touch an official office. [...] The 10th month of Shōtoku [1714], in the winter.⁹

Sorai wrote this preface at the request of Etsū Shōnin, one of Ueno Gentei's disciples; the title of the work to which it was attached was *Koku Shisei ikō* 國思靖遺稿 "Bequeathed Writings of Koku Shisei". Sorai makes a couple of his opinions quite clear in this preface. He is generally not that impressed with Nagasaki. It is a city based on gain and profit; a base motivation in all true Confucian thinking. The general breed of scholars in Nagasaki are motivated in the same vein. However, in this Sodom there are also exceptions, and Ueno Gentei is described as such an exception. Admirably Confucian, he had scorned profit and lived for true virtue. As already mentioned above, Sorai had never met Ueno Gentei and he therefore had to rely himself on secondary sources (e.g., students from Nagasaki who had studied with Ueno Gentei, such as Okajima Kanzan, Etsū Shōnin, and others) to write the preface.

It was a memorable event in Sorai's life when he met Eppō, the leading ecclesiastic of the Ōbaku sect. A native of Che Chiang of China, he had come to Japan in 1686 to become the abbot of the Kōfukuji Temple in Nagasaki and later, in 1707, the abbot of the Ōbaku-san temple at Uji 宇治. Sorai met him on the 7th day of the 9th month of Hōei 4 (1707). Thus, Sorai had his meeting with Eppō half a year before the meeting that Yanagisawa had had with him (on the 1st day of the 3rd month). He was also called into the presence of Shogun Tsunayoshi. It is indicative of the importance people attached to these meetings that the conversations by means of brush were preserved. Sorai's conversation with him seems to be preserved in full, and Yanagisawa's only in part. It was perhaps also the first and perhaps only time that Sorai had had

9 Ibid.: 79.

the opportunity to face a living Chinese, a fact that added to the solemnity of the occasion. They met at the Kanrodō Hall 甘露堂 of Zuishōji Temple 瑞聖寺. Since the conversation presents many interesting points, we shall attempt a translation of the same.

[Sorai:]

When I was little, I heard that in olden days there was a man of great virtue at the Tōmei 東明 Temple in Nagasaki. His name was Reverend Teiichi. This priest was a man of extreme spirit and sagacity. He was greatly talented and much advanced in the arts. His reputation was great. Therefore, all those who wished to study and learn in Nagasaki at the time asked him to become their teacher. He had a ‘white-dressed’ 白衣 (*hakui*) disciple whose name was Teian 鼎菴. In an earlier year 前年 (*zennen*) he arrived here [Edo]. I met him. From that time on I rapidly came to know much about the Tōmei Temple. Three or four years ago the teacher of law, Kōshū, arrived here in the east. He lectured about your morality 道德 (*dōtoku*), old reverend, and I, humble one, listened. Therefore, for a long time I have looked up to, and admired, your high virtue. How did not you, old reverend, gloriously receive the heavenly mandate! Your purple spirit goes beyond all barriers. Whenever I revere you today, my happiness knows no bounds.

[Eppō:]

Today’s meeting is truly something that was predestined through the good karma of numerous existences. And I take delight in meeting a reputable person like you. I once heard that Teian of Nagasaki really was the excellent student of the late master Tei[ichi]. How regrettable it is that I [did not have a chance] to experience those times. I can only greatly lament it. One day I was honoured by receiving a message from you. Now, however, I know your honourable face. One can say that this was an auspicious encounter. I can respectfully say that the teacher of law, named Kōshū, was also an acquaintance of mine. The two of you complement each other. How I am extremely envious and full of admiration!

[Sorai:]

I really did not know that Reverend Teiichi had been your late teacher. If my writing is improper and I deserve blame, please forgive me!

[Eppō:]

Your honourable brush is like a grand beam. Your words clarify the truth for vulgar people. All of it comes from your walking the Buddhist Way. There is nothing like that in the minds of ordinary men.

[Sorai:]

I receive too much praise. How do I not perspire and blush? Now, as for your speaking about my walking the Buddhist Way, I do not know why you, old reverend, say something like that. It is in truth a shame!

[Eppō:]

Because I saw that you bring and eat vegetarian food, that you teach and guide your fellow people, and that you strictly guard the Buddhist Law, how must you not then be walking the Buddhist Way?

[Sorai:]

This makes me so ashamed that I could die! To strictly guard the Buddhist Law is a matter of extreme greatness. How could I, whose strength is that of a mosquito, carry such a burden? Now, as for my eating vegetarian food, this, old reverend, you have got wrong. In the olden days I met with a big misfortune. This was caused by a great crime of mine. A stipend 利祿 (*riroku*) is what fetters me. Since I cannot abandon my official post, I must follow the regulations that [the Duke of] Chou and Confucius have handed down. According to *Chou li* regulations one mourns for 50 days. Soon it is over, and then I shall re-enter my official service. Nevertheless, in this heart of mine there remains a somewhat restless spot. Therefore, I just can not eat meat. I do not drink wine, I do not read poetry, I do not listen to music. I am close to having repaid one 10,000th of my crime of unfiliality. This is what does not deserve to be mentioned.

[Eppō:]

The bond between Father and Son is regarded as most important among the Five Relationships 五輪 (*wu-lun*). In our Buddhist world we reverently store and keep the literature of illumination. And by means of it we can raise living and dead and ascend to the Way of Heaven 天道 (*t'ien-tao*). In contrast to the Confucian creed 儒宗 (*ju-tsung*) it does not concern only what lies between Heaven and Earth. I think there is a Buddhist precept 律師 (*lü-shih*) that orders parents to promote and teach it. There is no one who is able to convince like a Chinese priest.

[Sorai:]

Your [human] heart, old reverend, is truly identical with Buddha's enlightened and greatly compassionate heart. How am I not filled with respect! I once heard that your honourable surname is Ku 顧. In ancient days at the court of Chin 晉 [265–420] there was a certain Ku of brilliance and fame. Since then, this important family has been unbroken for generations. It is truly the foremost noble family to the south of the river [Yang-tze Kiang]. [Thus], you are not only to be respected for your virtue, but also for your unusual family background. And

now, today, I have a chance to look up at your compassionate face. In a spontaneous and natural manner there is an atmosphere of purity and nobility about you. Truly, I bow in respect at your feet!

[Eppō:]

Although our poor family 寒族 (*han-tsu*) has endured for a long time, its later generations have not been talented. I dare not, I dare not accept your admiration.

[Sorai:]

I heard that your native place is Hangchow 杭州 [the capital of Chekiang]. This place was the ancient capital of Sung China. I think that its culture and habits are not like those of other places. I truly think so.

[Eppō:]

The landscape of our lowly place was the capital of Kao Tsung 高宗. Traces of loyalty and righteousness have remained there until this day.

[Sorai:]

The reputation of the Western lake (Hsi hu) is high in the world. I think that you, old reverend, have visited there and are highly familiar with the place. Both the Ku Shan Mountains 孤山 and the Su T'i 蘇堤 are famous; they reek with memories, bequeathed by people. The tomb of King Yo 岳 is the foremost trace of loyalty and righteousness. I beg to hear details of it.

[Eppō:]

What you say is all true. The court was there for many generations. Up to this day it is the great temple that the people of our country long for. The scenery of the Western Lake simply cannot be described fully with one brush-stroke.

[Sorai:]

This is so. This is so.

[Sorai:]

On the Ku Shan there are still plum flowers, are there not?

[Eppō:]

The plum flowers still flourish there. In olden times it was said that the Ku Shan possessed a divine spirit. Last year Emperor K'ang-hsi arrived there, and reestablished the Imperial Castle at the Ku Shan.

[Sorai:]

How deplorable! Is it like what Shih Huang-ti in his general disposition did: He destroyed the scenery, He destroyed the scenes! So it has been recorded in Chinese books.

[Eppō:]

There is talk to that effect.

[Sorai:]

I suppose that you are familiar with the three Buddhist temples T'ien Chu 天竺, Ling Yin 靈隱, and Ch'ing Tz'u 清慈. Among the various hills there, which stretch high to the South and which stretch high to the North?

[Eppō:]

From my young days I have devoted myself to studies, but in my spare time I have been able to go and enjoy them. Therefore, they are places with which I am familiar.

[Sorai:]

Since you became incarnate in your grand land 上國 (*jōkoku*), you have fully seen famous places. How enormous is my envy! How wide is that Western Lake?

[Eppō:]

[The width of] the Western Lake and [the city of] Ch'eng-pien 城遷 together is 4 li. Flowers and willows grow in extreme profusion there.

[Sorai:]

Have you, old reverend, crossed the Chiang Shui 江水? How many li wide is the Chiang Shui?

[Eppō:]

The Ts'ien T'ang 錢唐 River [in Che Chiang] is 2 li wide. It is very difficult to cross it.

[Sorai:]

The tide of the Ts'ien T'ang is a world wonder. Did you ever watch it on the 15th day of the 8th lunar month?

[Eppō:]

When one watches the tide in the 8th month, the crest of the tide is like a mountain. It is the first thing in the world to see.

[Sorai:]

In earlier years I studied and learned some phrases of [spoken] Chinese, but it sounded like the chirping of birds. I can write, but when I open my mouth, I truly cannot speak.

[Sorai:]

What is that paper called in China. In an earlier year a person said that in China it is called “nose paper” 鼻紙 (*hanagami*). Is that so?

[Eppō:]

That is correct.

[Sorai:]

I lift up an object from the belt at my waist, and I ask: Is this object a pouch 荷包 (*hōpō*)?

[Eppō:]

That is correct.

[Sorai:]

I lift up a medical box 印籠 (*inrō*), and I ask: How is this object called in China?

[Eppō:]

It is a medical bag 藥袋 (*yao-dai*).

[Sorai:]

I lift up a holder 根著緒占 (*koncho shosen*), and I ask: What is it called?

[Eppō:]

In China we do not have such an object.

[Sorai:]

I point above my head, and I ask: What is this called?

[Eppō:]

“Flower paper” 花紙 (*hua shih*).

[Sorai:]

Further I ask: What is that board called?

[Sorai:]

I point at the water trough outside and I ask: What is it?

[Eppō:]

It is an “under-the-eaves board” 簷下板 (*yen-hsia-ban*).

[Sorai:]

In Japan the object on which one puts books is called a *kendai* 見臺. I assume that that is something that you, old reverend, have seen. Do you have this object in China? What do you call it?

[Eppō:]

In China we call it “literature rack” 文架 (*wen-chia*), “book-rack” 書架 (*shu-chia*), or “book-tower” 書臺 (*shu-t'ai*). Individually, they are not uniform. As you have said it, we do not express it. We do not have it.

[Sorai:]

I do not know whether the cherry blossoms we have in Japan are cherry or peach flowers, or whether they are the wild plum 海欒 (*kaitō*; *Pryus spectabilis*).

[Eppō:]

The wild plum is not a cherry blossom. China has no flower that can be compared to the cherry blossom.

[Sorai:]

This man is in truth Teian's disciple. His [spoken] Chinese is much better than mine.

[Eppō:]

Due to our karma, even though we are separated by 1000 li, we meet. My admiration for you is extreme.

[Sorai:]

What do you call a stone with which one usually carves pictures and books?

[Eppō:]

In China we have both the “heavenly flower stone” 天花石 (*t'ien-hua-shih*) and the “mountain of long age stone” 壽山石 (*shou-shan-shih*). They are not identical.

[Sorai:]

Do those two [stones] have the same colour and form?

[Eppō:]

That “heavenly-flower stone” looks like it has flower rings. The “mountain of long age stone” has harmonious colour.

[Sorai:]

Is the “mountain of long age” the name of a place? Does it belong to some region?

[Eppō:]

It belongs to Fu-chou 福州.

[Sorai:]

Does Chinese poetry ever have rules? In Japan [poetry] has Japanese rules. I do not yet know the Chinese [rules]. Therefore I am humbly asking.

[Eppō]

When I look at what is used in China, it is no different from [what is used in] Japan. But in sounds and words there are rules about what fits and what does not fit. Only in this regard there is a difference.

[Sorai:]

There is no difference in the laws 法式 (*hōshiki*) for composing poetry. It is really as you honourably said. Could I, little one, then ask humbly you abbot, the etiquette-rules when attending a banquet. I think that there are no [such] rules in China. Everybody does what he pleases.

[Eppō:]

[The reverend nodded and said:] Everyone does what he pleases.

[Sorai:]

The Great Teacher Lien-ch’ih 蓮池 of the Yun-ch’i Ssu Temple 雲棲寺 [in Che Chiang] centred on [actually: united] the three teachings of [Zen] meditation, [Amida] devotion, and [Ritsu] discipline. Therefore, the three teachings are all revered and respected. But what teaching does the Unseiji Temple adhere to today?

[Eppō:]

The three teachings are all practised. Its gate of law is extremely easy to pass through.

[Sorai:]

Do [the monks] at the Unseiji Temple recite supplicatory scriptures daily (*gam-mon*) to the West [Amida]?

[Eppō:]

The citing [of supplicatory scriptures] in the world is something that was established by the Great Master Hung 洪.

[Sorai:]

At the sides of the entrance of a temple there are stone slabs with inscriptions – also wooden slabs are used – which forbid bringing non-vegetarian food [leaks and wine] through the gate. What are these stone slabs and wooden signboards called?

[Eppō:]

It was not for any long time that stone-slabs were used for the signboards which forbid [bringing in non-vegetarian food].

[Sorai:]

What do you call the placards on which you write antithetical couplets?

[Eppō:]

Tui-lien 對聯 (*tsui-ren*)¹⁰.

[Sorai:]

What do you call the little space in the margin of books where you write notes:

[Eppō]

Chi-hao 記號 (*kigō*)¹¹.

[Sorai:]

The propriety laws of China comprise one kind of low bow. It is said in [some text] that he made one great bow deep down to the ground. Is this the meaning?

[Eppō:]

Correct.

[Sorai:]

Among the laws for poetry there are the “laughing rhymes” 亞韻 (*ain*). When there is a line like “five *shi* 支 and twenty-four *kan* 鯁”, this is a laughing rhyme. I do not know the meaning. Japanese cannot really understand it.

[Eppō:]

Rhymes have their corresponding usage. Their system follows the areas of the North and South. This is because that which is light and voiced and that which is heavy and unvoiced differs.

10 Scrolls hung on the walls consisting of rhymed antithetical couplets.

11 “Space for marks”.

[Sorai:]

Why is it that “five *shi* and twenty *kan*” constitute a “laughing rhyme”? This principle is not clear to me. Please enlighten me!

[Eppō:]

But please read the rhyming books for reference! If you do so, you will understand it as well as you understand your own palm.

[Sorai:]

Although Japanese read rhyming book, they really cannot understand it. Another day I will bring a rhyming book and come and ask you to teach me. I will not mention it for the time being.

[Sorai:]

In the novels there is a character 齒句, “stanza”, “couplet”. Whenever I consult the dictionaries, it is not to be found. What is the sound of this character? Please enlighten me!

[Eppō:]

It is a character you find in plays. Its sound is 尺 (*ch'ih*). It also means a piece of music.

[Sorai:]

When I write and I come to where I write honourable people's names and pen names, then I begin a new line or I leave an empty space in my writing. This point of beginning a new line is called “single raised heading” or “double raised heading”. In a situation where you leave an empty space, what do you call that? The Japanese call it “lacking a word”.

[Eppō:]

The reverend says: Also in China they say “Raised Heading”. Further, they say that “one space empty is in good taste”.

[Sorai:]

Do you know the meaning of 晝卯 (*gabō*)¹²?

[Eppō:]

Every four days lower officials arrive at their offices early in the morning [and do their work] between 6 and 8 o'clock.

12 “To draw the *mao*”, i.e. the checking-off of the attendance of lower officials between 6 and 8 o'clock in the morning.

[Eppō:]

Those who arrive to do work between 6 and 8 are called the “6–8 o’clock officials”.

[Sorai:]

Is it so that officials, once every fourth day, ascend the hall 堂 (*dō*) and check off their names?

[Eppō:]

The lower employees (*chih-shih-jen*) are the *mao* 卯 (register). They are clerks (*shih-shih-jen*), not officials.

[Sorai:]

During the winter months when frost settles in the early morning in the garden, the soil becomes messy and loose. In the crevices there are objects which look like icicles. What do you call these?

[Eppō:]

[The reverend said that] it is just frost.

[Sorai:]

Greatly I have received your teaching. And I have received flourishing enjoyment. How extremely lucky, am I not! I only fear that your honourable person has been disturbed. It can be said that I have kept you busy a whole day. It all amounts to the fact that I do not know how to thank you for everything.

The above [was written] on the 7th day of the 9th month of Hōei 4 [1707], the year of the Pig. It is a record of a conversation by brush with Eppō, the abbot of the Shin-Ōbaku 新黄檗 sect. It took place in the Kanrodō Hall of the Zuishōji Temple. Those who were present at that time were the Priest Kōshū, Ta[naka] Seigo, and Tō Kanzu 藤煥圖 [= Andō Tōya].¹³

We cannot deal with all the interesting points of this conversation, but must limit ourselves to points which are close to the subject of this article. A full discussion should be covered in future study. First, a priest, Teiichi, is mentioned. Sorai uses the wrong character for “tei” but there is no question that it is Priest Teiichi of the Kōfukuji Temple in Nagasaki. About Teiichi we do not know much, but we can assume from this and other passages, that he was a learned man, advanced both in Buddhism and Chinese. Ishiwara Teian had been his disciple, and it was perhaps he who had spoken warmly about Teiichi to Sorai.

13 ISHIZAKI: 56–61.

Here Sorai says that he has met Teian. Next Sorai mentions that Priest Kōshū came east three or four years earlier, that is, in 1704 or 1705. We can assume that he then came from Nagasaki and perhaps also from the Kōfukuji Temple. It should be remembered that Priest Kōshū was present at this conversation. It seems as though Sorai thinks that Teiichi was also Abbot Eppō's teacher, but, on this point, Eppō answers that he had met neither Teiichi nor Ishiwara Teian, but that he was well informed about them. Up to this point they discuss the Chinese and Nagasaki scholars, and it is after this that Sorai begins to ask about things in China. In the middle of these questions he offers some interesting information: He says at one point that he has learned, in recent years, some spoken Chinese, but "it sounds like the chirping of birds". And he continues: "I can write, but when I open my mouth, I truly cannot speak". If this was the situation in 1707, and this conversation performed by brush is evidence enough on this point, we wonder how Sorai could participate in discussions among Japanese only, when pronunciation did not matter. Here, when he was face-to-face with a Chinese person, it was better to hold on to the brush. At another point in the discussion Sorai makes a side remark: "This man is in truth Teian's disciple. His [spoken] Chinese is much better than mine." Who is "this man?" It should be someone present at the meeting, and since we know that Andō Tōya among the three listeners (Priest Kōshū and Tanaka Seigo being the others) had been Ishiwara Teian's disciple, we might assume that it was he to whom Sorai referred in this passage. Finally, an extremely polite tone pervades the whole conversation. And one has a feeling that it is Sorai who is extremely polite in his statements while Eppō shows more restraint. One receives the impression that there must have been some considerable age difference between them: Eppō, the old patriarch; Sorai, the young student. In reality Eppō by this time was fifty-two and Sorai forty-one, both grown men who could have very well dispensed with much polite phraseology.

Sorai showed that he was pleased with the meeting by writing a letter of gratitude the following day. In the letter we find, among other things:

Yesterday, I visited a Buddhist place 梵橋 (*bonkyō*) and for the first time I met your compassionate and gracious [person] 慈 | (*jibō*). We had a marvelous conversation on various subjects. It was like the echo-sounding of bells: when they sounded high [i.e., when Eppō spoke] inquiries were answered; when they sounded low [i.e., when Sorai spoke], there were gasping ahs. The brushes flew over the paper creating a wind; the ink came down on the paper producing flowers. Methinks that the Buddha nature in its marvellous clarity is like the moon when it shines on the myriad rivers and creates forms in accordance with

what it meets; if one does not get touched by it, there is no understanding it. It is not so when it comes to the run-of-the-mill scholars. They are shallow, and they leave no impression. Who among the priests can believe them? Moreover, you untiringly and diligently handed me your beautiful teaching. The spirit of harmony was tangible. Having returned home, I almost felt dizzy and I was haunted by the memories. [...] What is to be lamented is that it was just fragments of silks and pieces of jewels, and that it ended up totally in the hands of the officials; just some words, various theories, proposals. It is like when a poor man in a dream enters a dragon's treasure-house, becomes wildly rich and rolls in gems, only to find out that it was an ephemeral dream: afterwards he stands there with empty hands. I have just tasted the sweetest sweets, they still stick to my teeth and cheeks, and I cannot get them rinsed from my mouth. What I humbly wish for are three of those characters as sweet as nectar 甘露 (*kanro*); if at your leisure, after practising your Zen meditation, you would trouble your brush, and if I could attach them to my simple hut, words from an eternally connected, they would [shine there] for ever and ever. [...]¹⁴

There is no question that Sorai was delighted by meeting Eppō. There is nothing but superlatives and eulogy. We could go on like this, showing numerous examples of the interest that Japanese Confucian scholars took in things Chinese, Chinese studies, and Chinese visitors. In Sorai's case it was based on his fundamental belief in China as the home of all truth. Only there had Sages established the heavenly society, only there could philosophers find out what had gone wrong in later eras. As a result, we meet this keen interest, and this extreme respect toward Chinese.

Sorai's Translation Society

After Sorai left the Yanagisawa house in 1709, his Chinese studies were perhaps not as stimulated in the midst of city life as they had been in a lord's mansion where studies and intellectual pursuits were the order of the day. Whether such a situation was the reason or not, in 1711 he set up a society for the purpose of modern Chinese studies. Even though we can assume that Sorai came up with the idea, he mentions that he collaborated with two other people: his younger brother Tasuku 助 and a certain I Hakumei 井伯明, who are not mentioned in other contexts. What probably brought the society into existence more than anything else was the fact that there was an excellent teacher at hand: Okajima

14 HIRAISHI: 314.

Kanzan. Sorai had met Okajima in 1708 during the latter's first sojourn in Edo, and when he returned to Edo in 1710 and enrolled in the Hayashi School, apparently he soon became a visitor to Sorai's Ken'en school. Since Okajima, according to all evidence at hand, was somewhat irrational in his behaviour, it was perhaps necessary to set up a formal organisation with definite rules about time, place, and manner to profit from his immense Chinese knowledge. Thus, Sorai, Tasuku, and I Hakumei decided on the establishment of a "Translation Society" 譯社 (*Yakusha*) and Okajima Kanzan was invited to be teacher. As befitted Sorai's methodical temperament, he wrote out detailed bylaws for the society. Among them we find, for example:

Here I form a society by setting up an organisation together with I Hakumei and my younger brother Shukutatsu 叔達 [Tasuku 助], and inviting Master Oka[jima Kanzan], a man of Nagasaki, I appoint him the "translation teacher" 譯師 (*yakushi*). Since the master of the society 會生 (*kaisei*) takes on this in addition to being a disciple and scholar of the National Doctor's School 國子博士 (*kokushi hakase*, [Hayashi Hōkō 林鳳岡]), the meetings will take place in his domicile. [The master of the society] cannot frequently get out of service: only six or seven times [a month]. Therefore, we make his free days the days of our sessions. The day will be the 5th and 10th days of the month. In the first ten days of the month it will be on the [first] 5th and on the [first] 10th. In the middle ten days of the month it will be on the full-moon day [i.e. the 15th] and on the 20th. [However] since I lecture on the classics on the 20th in the mansion of my clan, there will be no session [on that day]. In the last ten days of the month it will be on the 25th and on the 30th. In short months there will be no [last] session. When adding this together, depending on the days [of the month], there will be five or four [sessions a month]. There remain two or three days that the master can use besides visiting his friends and old acquaintances, and managing his private affairs. This is with the view that he will not, when pressed by other things, come up with excuses and disrupt the dates of sessions. [...]¹⁵

Sorai wrote further:

Here, in truth, I began on the 5th day of the 10th month in the winter of the 1st year of the Shōtoku era [1711] an association in my cattle's abode. [It took place here] because I, Shigenori, I dare say presided over that day's meeting. Therefore, I wrote down rules saying:

15 Ibid.: 186–87.

“Generally, the dates of the sessions shall not be changed. [However,] if something is the matter with the master, the date can be changed. This is due to the fact that it does depend on him. Generally, if something arises with the host on the day of session, it shall be dismissed. [The members, in such case,] should not waste their time to come. If something arises with a member 客 (*kyaku*) the session shall not be dismissed. This is because [the members] have not arranged so together. The clothing must be casual, the attendants few. This is with the hope that we shall not be conspicuous in the neighbourhood. The hall [of study] does not need to be wide; the garden does not need to be in perfect condition. The food need not be regulated: it shall just be arranged so that, as a rule, we have a bowl of soup and a course of vegetables or meat, in total two courses. Cookies need not be provided; sake need not be served. However, if an outsider would, at some time, by chance bring us some dainties and delicacies we should accept it. Generally, the members of the society can decrease in number but they cannot increase; this is because we dislike [there to be too much] noise. However, if the host is familiar with someone and that person is not vulgar, then it is all right for someone perhaps at times to join us. The meetings shall on the whole begin in the morning and the adjournment take place around 3 and 5 in the afternoon. It must not be made a rule that we return home late in the evening. Generally, the discussion 談 (*tan*) of the society – its main goal – lies in changing the Eastern barbarians [the Japanese] by means of China. It will not be allowed that we replace what is elegant with what is vulgar. Generally, the rules of the society – what it must express – is complete in this; what cannot be completely expressed lies in not losing sight of what the society stands for. Generally, my fellow members should pay attention to these words. My wish is that nothing will ever be changed, and that our goal will be achieved!”¹⁶

What these rules show first of all is Sorai’s thoroughness. All the important points about place, time, and manner are set down in detail. Also the purpose of the society is delineated: the study of vulgar, that is, colloquial Chinese. However, this was not the final goal. The knowledge acquired in modern Chinese would only be the tool for further attainment of the ancient Way of the Sages. It is interesting that Sorai here, as in other instances, deprecates the Japanese as “Eastern Barbarians” (for which Japanese scholars soon took him to task).

The first meeting took place in the winter of 1711 at Sorai’s Ken’en school and home. We can assume that it was only this first, perhaps only organisa-

¹⁶ Ibid.: 187.

tional, meeting that convened in Sorai's city house. If the rules were followed, the sessions were held after that at Okajima Kanzan's place, which must have been in the Hayashi mansion or its vicinity. We do not have any record or minutes of the meetings, and thus we do not know whether the sessions were held regularly in the time that followed. According to Ishizaki, there is evidence that the society remained in existence until at least 1725.

Sorai also set up some strict rules about membership and attendance. Apparently he wished membership to be restricted. We do not know the number of original members, but a fair guess is that it did not exceed ten. By chance, we have a list of the members in 1725. In a work of the same year, the *Tōwa ruisan* 唐話類纂, written by Okajima Kanzan for the Translation Society, a list of twelve members is given:

- 1) Nagasaki Kanzan Okajima Sukeyuki Gyokusei 冠山岡嶋援之玉成
- 2) Hishū Priest Taichō 大潮
- 3) Tanshū Priest Tensan 天産
- 4) Hishū Priest Etsū 恵通
- 5) Mikawa Sorai Ogyū Shigenori, (na) Sōuemon 徂徠荻生茂卿 名宗右衛門
- 6) Edo Tōya Andō Kanzu Tōheki, Jinuemon 東野安藤煥圖 東壁仁右衛門
- 7) Shin'yō Shundai Dazai Jun Tokufu, Yauemon 春臺太宰純恵夫 弥右衛門
- 8) Edo Tōkai Shinozaki Koreaki Shibun, San'etsu, [later] Kingo 東海 篠崎維章子分三悦金吾
- 9) Shin'yō Hibara Amano Kagetane 曾原天野景胤
- 10) Edo Suiryū Yamada Masatomo Rinkō 翠柳山田正朝麟嶼
- 11) Edo Tōka Doe Jōbun, Sanshū 東華度會常芬 三周 [later] Shūri
Kushi Honshi 修理久志本氏
- 12) Edo Tōshū Majima Kōgen, Yūan 東洲馬島孝元 友庵

The first seven among these twelve members represent no problem. These include (1) the teacher and (2, 3, 4, 6, 7) disciples besides (5) Sorai himself. Most members are mentioned above. Yamada Rinkō (10) was also a member of Sorai's school. Apparently a child prodigy at twelve years of age he was already employed by the Bakufu as a Confucian scholar with a 200 koku sti-

pend (1724). In Sorai's school he received his Confucian training mainly from Dazai Shundai; part of the education was modern Chinese. He also studied in Itō Tōgai's school (1725–26). He died at twenty-four years of age in 1735. (8) Shinozaki Tōkai (1687–1740) and (9) Amano Keiin (1678–1748) are usually not listed as Sorai's disciples. In 1725 they left with Yamada Rinkō to study with Itō Tōgai, but while Yamada Rinkō returned to Sorai's school a year later, Tōkai Shinozaki and Keiin Amano remained in Kyoto and became full members of the Itō school. As for (11) Doe Tōka, we know only that he was born in Edo and served as a physician at the shogun's palace. Regarding (12) Majima Kōgen no information can be found.

This initiative on the part of Sorai and his associates led to modern Sino-Japanese studies in other places. Some of his students—including the teacher of the Translation Society—were attached to the shogun's castle. It is natural, therefore, that the same spirit was brought there and that interest in modern Chinese studies was more pronounced than ever before. Three of the students named above enrolled at Itō Jinsai's Kogidō 古義堂 School in Kyoto, and it can be surmised that they brought Sorai's thinking there. The fact is, whether Sorai is given the full credit or not, modern Chinese studies continued to be an important field of endeavour among Confucian scholars for the remainder of the Tokugawa era.

Further, the *kobunjigaku* studies at Sorai's school thus were not simply a copying of the *kobunji* of Li P'an-lung 李攀龍 (1514–59) and Wang Shih-chen 王世貞 (1526–90). There were elements that were Sorai's own innovations. Perhaps the most important one among them was this stress on thorough studies of modern Chinese in order to be able to penetrate the Chinese soul at the present as well as of the past.

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